

The Need for Restraint

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It has been said that the ability to use proper restraint in life's daily situations is a virtue. In Army Aviation, it is a necessity. A recent accident investigated by the U.S. Army Safety Center involved a Flight Engineer (FE) who was ejected out of the aircraft during the crash sequence. Due to the nature of the accident and a bit of good luck on the FE's part, he sustained only minor bruising and abrasions from the ejection. The FE had left excessive slack in the safety restraint strap on his "monkey harness," or rather his safety restraint assembly.

In addition, the FE used an attachment point on the aircraft that was not designed to restrain a 500-pound horizontal pull. While the FE did remain attached to the aircraft, he was fully ejected. The next enlisted crewmember, who is involved in an accident and improperly restrained may not be so lucky.

Aircrew Integrated System (ACIS) Advisory Message AISOI-02 states that the safety restraint assembly must be adjusted so that the soldier cannot fall from the aircraft. The attachment point in the aircraft must be designed to restrain a minimum of 500 pounds horizontal pull. This attachment point must be located so that the soldier can move about the aircraft freely, but not reach a point where the soldier can fall out of the aircraft.

In addition, the message states, "The safety restraint strap will be connected to the safety restraint assembly and the aircraft attachment point as per the unit ALSE SOP" Normally in utility and cargo aircraft, unit SOPs dictate that the attachment point is on the floor of the aircraft to an approved cargo tie down ring. Whether the attachment point procedures are in the ALSE SOP or a Safety and Standards SOP is irrelevant, as long as it is addressed, taught to standard, and enforced by leaders.

In this accident, the CH-47D FE attached his restraint strap to a ring at the top of a passenger seat next to the cabin door. The point here is that the unit did not teach, demonstrate, or approve of this attachment point in the aircraft to enlisted crewmembers. Flight Engineer Instructors and Standardization Flight Engineer Instructors must make a point of ensuring that their enlisted crew training programs stress the importance of proper crewmember restraint while operating the aircraft.